TL1329-18

INDONESIAN PROPAGANDA AND TIMORESE PUPPETS

Estevao Cabral, July 1993

In East Timor, we have now been fighting for the independence of our homeland for almost eighteen years. Many lives have been lost, many homes have been destroyed by fire. Countless atrocities have been committed by Indonesian troops. There may be even worse still to come.

In 1975, when Indonesia invaded East Timor, South East Asian regimes were caught up in a paranoia about containing the spread of communism. The expansionist military regime in Jakarta deliberately constructed an image of the leaders of the East Timorese Independence movement, FRETILIN, as a gang of dangerous communists backed by the Soviet Union. This distorted representation of FRETILIN still dominates Indonesian thinking, despite the fact that it is terribly outdated in the post-Cold War era. Indonesian troops in East Timor still believe that they are hunting for communists: members of FRETILIN and members of the Armed Resistance, FALINTIL, are referred to as Gerombolan Pengacau Keamanan (GPK) (gangs of security disruptors), in the daily discourse of the Indonesian armed forces. The anti-communist paranoia also surfaces regularly in Indonesian propaganda: when the Indonesian government manipulates its own media or when propaganda is filtered through statements by East Timorese 'sell outs' or 'puppets' used by the Indonesian regime against those fighting for the nationalist cause. The same paranoia even surfaces in the discourse of Indonesian diplomats.

When I was in Geneva at the UN Sub-Commission for Human Rights in August 1990, a member of the Indonesian Permanent Mission said to me "Look! The Soviet Union is going to collapse. There is no longer any need to fight for the independence of East Timor. You will not get support from the Soviet Union any more!"

My answer to him was simple. "Why are you worried? Is it because you are afraid that the next empire to collapse is the Indonesian one?" I was going to say more if he had stayed to talk to me.

We had this brief encounter in the buffet of the UN. As he heard my reaction he rushed away. If I had stayed up to the end of the session, he would have been able to boast about the accuracy of his prediction about the Soviet Union. A coup was led by hard-line communists against Michael Gorbachev on August 22, 1990. I left four days before the historic events in Moscow.

We did not engage in any further conversation as Indonesian officials never want to enter into discussion with any East Timorese who is against them. What suits them best is to work with Timorese 'sell outs' who are prepared to speak in their favour.

The Soviet Union did indeed support East Timor after 1975 but they so through appropriate international diplomatic channels. They voted in favour of East Timor at the United Nations, in every Resolution. However, at the same time, the Soviet Union was supporting the Indonesian military regime by selling arms, such

as Klasnikovs, which were used in East Timor against FALINTIL and against the civilian population.

One of the strategies that has been used by Indonesian propagandists ever since 1975 has been to accuse FRETILIN of getting support from the Soviet Union. The purpose of this propaganda was to gain support from 'democratic' Western politicians. Such propaganda now rings very hollow. If FRETILIN had had massive Soviet support, the Indonesian military would never had succeeded in controlling East Timor and casualties on both sides would have been even higher.

In April 1988 I had another meeting with four Indonesians in Utrecht in The Netherlands: two from the Intelligence service and two Members of Parliament. This meeting was arranged by The Netherlands branch of Pax Christi. One of the Indonesians put a question to me and my Timorese companion, Christiano da Costa. "How did FALINTIL manage to receive Klasnikovs from the Soviet Union? We answered in all sincerity: "To the best of our knowledge, we liberated those weapons from Indonesian soldiers."

<u>The unwinnable war against East Timor</u>

The Indonesian authorities must be beginning to feel a sense of defeat. Back in East Timor, they have tried to 'gain the hearts and minds' of the East Timorese through public works projects like the development of an infrastructure of roads and the building of schools. At the same time, Indonesian troops are operating all over the territory in a desperate effort to crush

FALINTIL, the resistance army. When their military campaigns fail, they turn their attention to oppressing civilians.

At the international level, the Indonesians make all kinds of efforts to gain the support of other nations and to cover up the flagrant human rights abuses in East Timor. As recently as July 8, 1993, Suharto made a statement to the press in Jakarta about the exchanges he had with President Bill Clinton in Japan. He said Indonesia invaded East Timor to bring a halt to the civil war. He also made the outrageous claim that the Indonesian government's actions in the territory were based on "respect for the human rights of the people of East Timor". However, he omitted mention of the crucial fact that the Indonesian government played an important role in provoking the civil war in East Timor in 1975. The Indonesian government and its Intelligence have never admitted to the fact that they incited the Democratic Union of Timor (UDT) to lead a coup-d'etat in August 1975? This was referred to as `Operasi Comodo' (Operation Dragon). It resulted in the killing of five Australian journalists, massacres of civilians and the burning of houses even before the actual invasion. Despite all of this, it seems that Suharto goes on weaving a tissue of lies around the history of Indonesian aggression in East Timor.

Indonesian minds are haunted by the idea that Communism is behind the nationalist struggles and the actions of those who are fighting for the sovereignty their country. The Indonesian government still does not seem to have understood that the East Timorese

aspirations have nothing to do with Communism. The Cold War is over. Arguments about East Timor's independence destabilising South East Asia are out of date. The Indonesian government should attempt to overcome its paranoia about Communism and come to the negotiating table. They should bear in mind that in 1983, Xanana Gusmao, then still a member of the Central Committee of FRETILIN and Commander in Chief of FALINTIL, announced to the world that an independent East Timor would be willing to take a full part in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). An independent East Timor could hardly be seen as a threat to South East Asia.

The country which does represent a real threat to South East Asia is Indonesia under the expansionist dictatorship of General Suharto. Indonesia has used all its power to suppress territories such as in Aceh, East Timor and West Papua which are struggling for their sovereignty. These local struggles have had nothing to do with the Cold War.

The paranoia of the Indonesian government and the brutality of its military regime is now well documented, yet we still see Indonesian diplomats attempting to convince world opinion with hypocrisy and distorted information and attempting to undermine support for the cause of the East Timorese people, the West Papuans and the people of Aceh-Sumatra.

The use of Timorese puppets in Indonesian propaganda exercises

Over the years, the Indonesian government has used many East

Timorese puppets in its propaganda offensives. The latest puppet was on show at the recent World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993. Indonesian diplomats in Vienna must have written the statement which was read by their chosen puppet: Paulino Gama. I will refer to him as Paulino.

Paulino used to be a top FALINTIL commander. But he surrendered to Indonesian troops in East Timor in the 1980s after years of fighting. His wife and his sons were killed by Indonesian troops. He left Indonesia for Portugal in the 1990s. This was only after he had been admitted to hospital in Indonesia for psychiatric care necessitated by the harsh treatment meted out to him after he surrendered. The statement read by Paulino to the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna was profoundly offensive to the East Timorese people but it was also a cruel insult to the man himself, to be used by the Indonesians in this public manner.

In the remainder of this section, I have selected for commentary just a few of the most outrageous claims made by Paulino in his 'statement'. He opened his 'statement' as follows:

> Once again, the cause of human rights throughout the world is being brought into this body of the United Nations, and to the attention of the world at large, in the search for measures which can help improve a fundamental principle expressed in the Holy Books of all religions and beliefs seeking peace between all men: mutual respect.

The religious tone in this 'statement' points clearly to Indonesian authorship. How can the Indonesians purport to observe this fundamental principle? The Indonesian government has never shown any evidence of observing a principle of 'mutual respect'

in their dealings with the East Timorese. The principle is not even observed in dealing with their own Indonesian citizens.

In his fifth paragraph of his 'statement', Paulino made the following preposterous claim:

> I am entitled to speak on the cause of human rights in East Timor as I am the President of the Timorese International Secretariat for Human Rights.

There is no such organisation. Why was Paulino permitted to take part in the UN conference while claiming this fake identity? How could the UN admit a person to make such statement when his credentials were not verified? The UN has compromised its own position on the question of human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian troops in East Timor and has undermined the force of all the Resolutions that have been passed on East Timor. The UN owes the Timorese people an explanation for this outrage.

In his sixth paragraph, Paulino said the following:

> After almost 450 years of Portuguese colonialism, Portugal should not use the existing situation to destroy the peaceful life of my people by feeding hopes and giving advice to provoke confrontation between brothers of the <u>same blood</u> and to disrespect the will of 98% who consider themselves Indonesian citizens under the adminstration of the Indonesian States.

This 'statement' again reveals the Indonesian authorship of the document. What we see here is the typical distorted Indonesian view of history. Here, Paulino is implying that Portugal is somehow stirring up resistance to the peaceful 'integration' of East Timor into the Indonesian state as if Timorese people had no will of their own! The struggle for the independence of East

Timor was initiated by the East Timorese themselves under the leadership of ASDT/FRETILIN. Moreover, Portugal has not always been in direct confrontation with Indonesia. The Indonesian government appears to have forgotten the secret talks held in London on March 9, 1975 and in Rome on November 1-2, 1975, between delegates from the Indonesian and Portuguese governments. The purpose of these meetings was to negotiate the future of East Timor: to decide if it should stay with Portugal or integrate with Indonesia!

We are not dependent on Portugal and have never been dependent on material support from outside Timor despite Indonesian claims. Only Indonesia has received material support from foreign governments. As I indicated earlier, they have received arms supplies from the former Soviet Union but also from several Western countries, including France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The East Timorese do not want their future to be decided by outsiders. Timorese people have continued to resist the brutal Indonesian invasion of their territory with enormous courage and because of this they must be included in any talks about the future of East Timor. If they had not resisted so resolutely they might have had same destiny as West Papua.

In the extract from his 'statement' cited above, Paulino represents Indonesians and East Timorese as "brothers of the same blood". He (or the writer of his statement) is playing the race card here. However, most East Timorese would be deeply offended

by suggestions that they are 'brothers' of Indonesians in any sense of the word. Anyway, as we all know, race is a cultural construct which is used from time to time for political expediency. There is no such connection in blood because the East Timorese have different ancestors, different culture and language from the politically dominant Javanese and Balinese. We do not have wish to be 'brothers' of Indonesian murderers and assassins.

Finally, a comment about Paulino's sweeping claim that 98% of people of East Timor claim to be 'Indonesian citizens'. This is a favourite theme of the Indonesian government but they have never produced any convincing evidence to back up their claim. It is well known that Indonesian troops have picked up people in the streets to sign petitions written by Indonesian military officers asking for 'integration'. In fact, a more accurate account of the situation would be that 98% of people of East Timor do not consider themselves to be Indonesian citizens but they unable to express this because of the harsh surveillance under the Indonesian military regime.

In paragraph fourteen of the 'statement', Paulino referred to the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM) as a "self-styled body". Whose voice is this in the text?" It reads like Indonesian government rhetoric! This statement is totally inaccurate and misleading. The CNRM is an umbrella organisation which includes all political parties, churches and individuals who are against the Indonesian occupation. It is widely acknowledged and well documented that the aims of the CNRM are to nationalise the war

against the occupying forces. The CNRM is recognised by thousands of East Timorese people at home and in exile as the main body representing Timorese interests.

The struggle for East Timor is not masterminded by leftists or communists as the Indonesian government always claims. This is the kind of argument that is typically adopted by right wing dictatorships to legitimise their regime of fear. So far Indonesia's annexation of East Timor has never received international recognition. Paulino also knows that the vast majority of the East Timorese people are united, through the CNRM, in their opposition to the illegal Indonesian occupation of their country. Most Timorese would be deeply insulted to see the organisation which articulates their aspirations for independence described as "self-styled body". Again, this suggests that the text was written for him.

There is just one last set of 'statements' by Paulino that I would like to respond to. In paragraphs fourteen and fifteen, he said:

Paragraph fourteen:

> We have now in the international forum a real "masquerade" of a marriage between professional international agitators and Portuguese officials trying to bury the past and act as though they were innocents who never violated human rights in East Timor.

Paragraph fifteen:

> I believe the time has come to say loud and clear: let the people of East Timor develop themselves under the protection of the Indonesian flag and don't impose the will of foreign minority interests, which would only bring more disgrace and suffering.

Which "foreign minority interests" and which "professional international agitators" do these statements refer to? Are Paulino and his co-authors referring to the solidarity groups all over the world which have painstakingly documented Indonesian atrocities in East Timor along with bodies like Amnesty International? These international bodies cannot in all seriousness be described as agitators or representatives of minority interests. In describing them in this way, Indonesians only show themselves in their true colours. The Indonesian government officials are the only professional international agitators that I know.

With the reference to the point about Portuguese officials trying to bury the past. The motivation for these attempts to discredit Portugal is clear: Portugal is becoming more effective in challenging Indonesia in the international arena and is actively seeking a solution to the war. Moreover, the Indonesians can never escape the fact that Portugal is still recognised by the UN as the sole administering power in East Timor. Independence is only opposed by the 'lunatic fringe' in Jakarta which is hopelessly out of touch with reality. The East Timorese people are a people of great integrity, they have a keen sense of democracy and have the capacity to develop themselves without any outside interference. Indonesian propaganda efforts are futile and cannot halt international criticism of the regime with the longest serving dictator in the world. It is unlikely that Suharto will relinquish his power. He is determined to stay and "bring more disgrace and suffering" to the people of East Timor.

Concluding comments

The 'integration' of East Timor into Indonesia has only been willed by the government in Jakarta and not by the Indonesian people. Indonesia is one of the most populated countries in the world, where thousands of people live below the poverty line. If the people of Indonesia knew about the atrocities committed by their government and the military in East Timor they would be appalled. It is hidden from them. Only lies and distortions appear in their own media. The Indonesian regime continues to deny the existence of the holocaust that they have created in East Timor over the last seventeen years of occupation.

As I have tried to show, a close analysis of the 'statement' made by Paulino at the UN Conference reveals that he is being used as a pawn in yet another Indonesian propaganda exercise. Paulino is known among the East Timorese as a commander of a FALINTIL unit which fought with courage to defend East Timor from Indonesian aggression. It is tragic to see a man 'turned' in this way and to see him selling out to the enemy. He will be shunned by his own people from now on. The Indonesian government will of course use him when and only when they want to. He is pursuing a dangerous course.

How many more puppets and Timorese sell outs will the Indonesian government use to distort information about the situation in East Timor? In the long run, the Indonesian government's strategies will prove to be self-defeating. The East Timorese occupy the moral high ground. Propaganda is of little use in covering up

atrocities.

The Timorese version of history is now well documented, all over the world. Thousands of FRETILIN and FALINTIL members were brutally massacred by the Indonesian troops during and after the invasion. Massacres took place even after they had surrendered to Indonesian troops under the so-called amnesty offered by Suharto in the late 1970s. The invasion also had a devastating effect on civilians. Most of the rural population are now homeless and have been forced to live in the strategic hamlets set up by the occupying forces.

The brutality continues. No one will forget the Santa Cruz massacre committed by the Indonesian army on November 12, 1991: some 200 young East Timorese in a peaceful procession, were gunned down by the Indonesian army. The military are still determined to kill anyone who oppose their will. Theo Syafei, the Indonesian General in East Timor said after the Santa Cruz massacre: "We are determined to shoot them [the East Timorese] and we will shoot them if they don't accept integration".

The confrontation between the East Timorese and the occupying forces will continue as long as Indonesian troops remain in East Timor. The determination of the East Timorese in fighting for independence has been acknowledged all over the world. A new generation is now coming into the struggle. The Indonesians will never win the war they are waging against East Timor. They will also never win their propaganda war. The East Timorese will

ensure that their propaganda exercises are exposed and challenged through the media and in academic or popular forums. The Suharto regime will never be able to deceive the world community with its lies and its distorted accounts of history. Indonesian propaganda offensives will be countered by the East Timorese at every turn.

A 'consolidation of Pancasila' in East Timor is out of question. The problems of East Timor will not be resolved while Indonesia continues to occupy the territory illegally. Ali Alatas, the current Indonesian Foreign Minister is known to have said that East Timor is "the stone in Indonesia's shoe". The tragedy for East Timor lies in the fact that those who retain political control in Indonesia are those who want to stamp out the stone with heavy boots. However, in the long run, the only solution to the "stone in the shoe" is to remove the boot altogether.

The struggle will go on!
To resist is to win!

End note:

Perhaps the most concretely revealing evidence of Indonesian authorship of this document is the spelling mistake on the title page. The word International is spelled with s instead of a t, as in Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language). If Paulino Gama had written it and made a spelling error himself, he would have put a c since his dominant language of literacy is Portuguese.